

**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA
Charlotte Division**

In re:

CRAIG ALLEN PONDER, SR.,

Debtor.

Case Number: 24-30644

Chapter 7

**APPLICATION TO EMPLOY GRIER WRIGHT MARTINEZ, PA
AS ATTORNEYS FOR THE TRUSTEE**

To the Honorable J. Craig Whitley, United States Bankruptcy Judge:

The Application of A. Cotten Wright respectfully alleges:

1. Applicant is the duly qualified and acting trustee in this case.
2. To perform her duties in this regard, your applicant requires the services of attorneys for the following purposes:
 - a. To advise and consult with applicant concerning questions arising in the conduct of the administration of the estate and concerning applicant's rights and remedies with regard to the estate's assets and the claims of secured, preferred and unsecured creditors and other parties in interest.
 - b. To appear for, prosecute, defend and represent applicant's interest in suits arising in or related to this case.
 - c. To assist in the preparation of such pleadings, motions, notices and orders as are required for the orderly administration of this estate.
3. For the foregoing and all other necessary and property purposes, applicant desires to retain generally the law firm of Grier Wright Martinez, PA (the "Grier Firm"), as counsel for the trustee.
4. Because the Grier Firm specializes in bankruptcy cases, corporate reorganization, and debtor/creditor matters, and because of its experience in those fields, applicant feels that said law firm is well qualified to render the foregoing services.
5. In or about April, 2024, the debtor in this case (the "Debtor") contacted Joseph W. Grier, III ("Grier"), one of the principals of the Grier Firm, inquiring as to representation. Grier maintains that the Debtor did not impart any information

beyond what would be required to be disclosed in a bankruptcy filing or any information that could be used to the detriment of the Debtor. Grier referred the Debtor to other local bankruptcy attorneys.

6. Therefore, based upon the Declaration attached hereto, applicant believes that the Grier Firm and its members and associates, do not hold or represent any interest adverse to that of your applicant or the Debtor's estate and that said law firm is a disinterested person within the meaning of 11 U.S.C. § 101. Applicant is informed that the normal hourly billing rates of said law firm at the time of this Application range from \$425.00 to \$695.00 per hour for partners, \$410.00 for associates and \$190.00 for paraprofessionals. It is contemplated that the Grier Firm will seek compensation based upon normal and usual hourly billing rates. Applicant is informed and believes that the hourly rates of the Grier Firm are reasonable in light of the current hourly rates charged by other attorneys in the Western District of North Carolina area. It is further contemplated that said attorneys will seek interim compensation during the case as permitted by 11 U.S.C. § 331.
7. The Court has power to authorize employment of the Grier Firm pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 327(a) which states in pertinent part:

[T]he trustee, with the court's approval, may employ one or more attorneys or other professional persons, that do not hold or represent an interest adverse to the estate, and that are disinterested persons, to represent or assist the trustee in carrying out the trustee's duties under this title.

WHEREFORE, applicant prays that she be authorized to employ Grier Wright Martinez, PA, generally, as her attorneys to render services in the areas described above with compensation to be paid as an administrative expense in such amounts as this court may hereinafter determine and allow upon application or applications to be filed by said attorney(s).

This the 30th day of August, 2024.

/s/ A. Cotten Wright
A. Cotten Wright, Trustee

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DECLARATION OF PROPOSED ATTORNEY TO BE EMPLOYED

A. Cotten Wright says:

1. I am an attorney at law admitted to practice before this court and am a member of the law firm of Grier Wright Martinez, PA (the “Grier Firm”) with offices at 521 E. Morehead Street, Suite 440, Charlotte, NC 28202.

2. I seek approval to engage the Grier Firm to represent me in the above-referenced bankruptcy case. To that end, I hereby disclose that, in or about April, 2024, the debtor in this case (the “Debtor”) contacted Joseph W. Grier, III (“Grier”), one of the principals of the Grier Firm, inquiring as to representation. Grier maintains that the Debtor did not impart any information beyond what would be required to be disclosed in a bankruptcy filing or any information that could be used to the detriment of the Debtor. Grier referred the Debtor to other local bankruptcy attorneys.

3. Accordingly, neither I, my firm, nor any member or associate thereof, insofar as I have been able to ascertain, has any connection with the Debtor, his creditors, or any other party in interest, their respective attorneys and accountants, the Bankruptcy Administrator, or any person employed in the office of the Bankruptcy Administrator.

4. Neither I, my firm, nor any member or associate thereof, insofar as I have been able to ascertain, represents any interest adverse to that of the estate or the Debtor in the matters upon which said law firm is to be engaged.

5. Based on the foregoing, I believe the firm of Grier Wright Martinez, PA is a “disinterested person” within the meaning of §§ 101 and 327 of the Bankruptcy Code.

This the 30th day of August, 2024.

/s/ A. Cotten Wright

A. Cotten Wright (State Bar No. 28162)

Grier Wright Martinez, PA

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that the foregoing *Application to Employ Grier Wright Martinez, PA as Attorneys for the Trustee* and *Declaration of Proposed Attorney to be Employed* were served on those parties who have requested notice in this case through the court's electronic case filing system.

This the 30th day of August, 2024.

/s/ A. Cotten Wright

A. Cotten Wright

Grier Wright Martinez, PA

521 E. Morehead St., Ste. 440

Charlotte, NC 28202